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## Chapter 6. Medieval Guildhalls as *habitus*.

### Introduction

This chapter will be concerned with the archaeological and theoretical interpretation of York's medieval guildhalls. It will present an analysis of their topographical location, chronology, form and function framed by the research agenda set out in Chapter 2, and the theoretical position outlined in Chapter 1. Bourdieu's (1977; 1979) idea of *habitus* will be used to suggest that their spatial organisation was part of a wider understanding of the ways in which architecture could be used to structure individual and communal identities in medieval society. Giddens' (1984) structuration theory will inform the interpretation of the reflexive and recursive nature of the social practices which occurred within the guildhall, as well as the analysis of the multiple ways in which dominant religious discourses were used to underpin the structuration of social and political power by particular levels of society. After considering these issues in relation to the halls, hospitals and chapels of guilds, the chapter will briefly consider their implications for the wider study of medieval urban space and civic architecture.

### 6.1 Guildhalls, occupational topography and chronology in late medieval York

Chapter 2 has suggested that existing typological approaches based on the form of medieval guildhalls do not explain why they were built in the first place, nor do they take account of their complex construction and use over time. An alternative, contextual approach will be developed in relation to York's medieval guildhalls. This highlights their important connections with the occupational topography of the city, and suggests that their construction was bound up with the desire of particular fraternities or mysteries to construct or emphasise their corporate identity during periods of expansion, amalgamation or crisis. Religious fraternities and craft mysteries in York commonly sought two or three different modes of expression through which they channelled their social, religious and charitable functions. These were a place where they could meet to discuss their administrative business; a devotional focus (often an altar, light or image within a parish church or monastic chapel); and increasingly during the fifteenth century, some form of charitable focus (usually a *maison dieu* or hospital). Although these spaces were linked by the guilds' activities, they were often located in different topographical contexts. The construction of a guildhall enabled both types of guild to bring together two or more of these elements, quite literally, under one roof.

It was common for fourteenth-century craft mysteries to use for business meetings the naves and aisles of parish churches in which their associated fraternities maintained altars, obits and lights

(Davies 1968; Cook 1954). Unfortunately this practice is rarely explicitly recorded in York, with the exception of references to the mayor and aldermen meeting for discussion before the chapel of the guild of St. Christopher in the south aisle of the Minster (YCR 2, 14). Evidence from historical records (VCH 1961; Raine 1955) suggests that a similar use may have been made of those naves or aisles of churches where purely religious guilds were based, such as the fraternity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary in St. Crux, St. Nicholas' guild in Micklegate and the various guilds dedicated to St. Mary in St. Margaret's Walmgate, All Saints' Pavement, St. Nicholas Micklegate and St. Lawrence's Walmgate. This may also have been the case for the religious fraternities associated with craft mysteries such as the weavers in All Saints' North Street, the fishmongers at St. Denys' Walmgate, the pinners and butchers in St. Crux and the skinners in St. Giles' Gillygate, whilst St. George's fraternity met in the chapel of the Knights' Templars in Castlegate, and the marshals and the smiths in the chapel of St. William on Ouse bridge.

Several guilds also used the rooms and chapels of the townhouses of religious orders to provide at least two of the three modes of expression outlined above (VCH 1961; Raine 1955). The carpenters and their associated fraternity of the Resurrection met within the Austin Friary in Lendal, where the guild of St. Catherine was also based. The cordwainers and their associated fraternity of St. Mary the Virgin met in the Carmelite Friary in Hungate. Similar connections existed between the adulterine guild of Holy Trinity based in the Friars' Dominicans in Toft Green, and the Paternoster guild, which met in a house belonging to Bridlington Priory in Aldwark.

During the fifteenth century these two modes of expression were enhanced by connections with charitable institutions, including hospitals and *maisons dieu*. Some guilds simply created an informal link with an existing hospital or *maison dieu*, but those who were already constructing their own halls appear to have sought to incorporate such a foundation within the guildhall complex itself. Table 1, Appendix 6 juxtaposes evidence for these three modes of expression with details of purpose-built guildhalls in later medieval York. Table 2 and fig. 167 relates this data to research into the 'occupational topography' of medieval York carried out by Goldberg (1992) in which data from the 1381 Poll Tax and fifteenth-century probate sources was used to identify the inhabitation and continuity of association between craft groups and particular areas of the city over time. These demonstrate the very strong connection between the occupational 'zones' of particular crafts, and the devotional foci of their guild, or craft fraternity.

This connection is significant because it challenges Swanson's (1989) hypothesis that the guild system was an artificial structure imposed on an artisan class by the mercantile elite, and provides an important caveat to traditional, functionalist interpretations of the occupational zoning of medieval cities (Schofield and Vince 1994; Miller and Hatcher 1995). This patterning suggests that not only craft workshops but also their associated households tended to congregate in particular areas of the city. This linked the basic units of production and consumption -the household- with the wider communal identity of the craft at the level of the neighbourhood or the parish. This occupational concentration of craft groups probably created a 'snowball effect' by attracting recent immigrants and prospective apprentices to the area. Peripatetic labourers and journeymen may also have been similarly attracted by the prospect of casual or temporary employment in these established workshops. Such a close topographical connection between the two sides of the labour market would have facilitated the kinds of informal employment arrangements indicated by the carpenters' ordinances of 1482:

..it is also ordeyned that thar shalbe every year a brodir chosyn and assigned of the said fraternite, to who every brodir that is owt of wark shall make knowlege that he is owt of wark, so that he that wold have a warkman may have knowlege of hym that is owt of wark (YMB 2, 280)

The creation of a devotional focus in the local parish church or monastic townhouse reinforced the connections between the household, workshop and the craft community as a whole. But the creation of a devotional focus within these parishes also provided a mechanism through which craftsmen living and working outside these occupational zones could be incorporated into the craft community.

In addition to the influence of contemporary occupational topography, the location of York's medieval guildhalls was influenced by the archaeology of the city, and the historic associations of space and place which were embedded in civic memory. As Benjamin (1979; see also Urry 1995, 24-5) has argued, the city is a repository of social memory, and buildings may take on a series of meanings and collective myths related to their social use and inhabitation over time. The street layout and monumental space of the medieval city was underpinned and informed by the Roman city with its *via principia*, its fortress and its defensive walls (Ottaway 1992; 1993; Hall 1996, 28-9). The line of the principal Roman streets conferred prestige and symbolic importance on Petergate and Stonegate, and the ecclesiastical liberty surrounding the Minster. Medieval burgage plots appear to follow the lines of Roman property divisions. Indeed Rees Jones (forthcoming) has suggested that the organisation of medieval civic space was underpinned by Classical ideas about the form and appearance of the city. Over time these associations were enhanced and transformed by the occupational history of a street or neighbourhood. The decision to build a new

building was also affected by the existence of previous buildings on the site. Medieval craftsmen and their patrons were highly aware, not only of the technical and strategic implications of their surviving fabric or foundations, but also the social and symbolic resonances which their previous inhabitants conferred on the site.

The integration of all of the above factors could produce a powerfully charged site for monumental buildings such as guildhalls. For example both the fraternity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and that of St. John the Baptist had existing connections with the Fossgate and Aldwark sites on which they built their halls. The former had previously met in the parish church of St. Crux in Fossgate, and large numbers of the mercers and merchants who lived in this 'commercial zone' of medieval York were members of the fraternity and the mercantile mystery with which it became associated in the fifteenth century. It is possible that St. John the Baptist's fraternity had shared the use of the Aldwark site of its hall with the mystery of tailors with which it became associated. But both sites were also locations on which high status domestic buildings had previously been constructed. This conferred a particular kind of prestige through association on the guildhalls which replaced them. A similar connection may have been made by St. George's guild, who used the old chapel of the Knights' Templars near the castle before their amalgamation with the guild of St. Christopher in *c.*1446/7 (fig. 168). Much of the chapel's medieval masonry was used to repair Ousebridge in 1571, and it was largely rebuilt as a workhouse in the seventeenth century before being demolished in 1856 (Cooper 1911, 138-140).

An historic connection with a particular area or site also influenced the location of other guildhalls (VCH 1961; Raine 1955). The butchers' fifteenth-century hall in the Shambles was very close to the church of St. Crux, in which the fraternity still maintained a chapel in the sixteenth century (fig. 169). The cordwainers constructed their fifteenth-century hall in Hungate, close to the Carmelite Friary in which they had traditionally met, and where their fraternity of the Virgin Mary continued to be based (fig. 170). More symbolic associations were made by the decision of the newly amalgamated guilds of St. Christopher and St. George to fund the construction of the new Guildhall on the site of the earlier hall of the guild merchant, which subsequently became the 'common hall' of the corporation itself (fig. 172; White 1987). The topographical connection between the old and new Guildhalls therefore symbolised not only the connection between the two associations but also that between the city's fifteenth-century government and its political predecessors. The construction of a hall by the guild of Corpus Christi adjacent to the existing hospital of St. Thomas in 1478 also had important resonances (fig. 173). Corpus Christi was the wealthiest guild in the city, drawing members not only from across the social scale, but from the Yorkshire gentry, leading citizens of London and the royal family (Crouch 1995). The hall was

placed directly next to Micklegate Bar, the ceremonial entrance to the city from London. Through its liminal position the guildhall symbolised the guild's regional and national connections, but it also made the guildhall and hospital the first religious and charitable institution to be seen (and patronised) by prestigious visitors to the city.

This section has sought to explain the topographical location of guildhalls in later medieval York through an understanding of the ways in which three 'modes of expression' were embedded in occupational topography, and the historic associations of civic space and place. However this does not explain why some guilds should have chosen to build purpose-built guildhalls whilst others were content to continue their meetings and devotional activities in existing *locales*. A hypothesis can be advanced in relation to the York evidence that the construction of a guildhall was related to a specific moment of change, expansion, or crisis in the corporate identity of the guild or mystery concerned. Trinity and St. John the Baptist's halls represent subtle examples of this point. Previous interpretations have stressed the separation of the fourteenth-century religious fraternities who constructed these halls from the mysteries of the mercers and tailors with which they became formally associated later in the fifteenth-century (Crouch 1995; Johnson 1949). But prosopographical and testamentary evidence suggests that informal connections between the membership of these associations may have existed at a much earlier date (Sellers 1918; Wheatley 1993). The construction of these halls may therefore have symbolised the beginnings of relationships which were formalised only later in the fifteenth century.

Two of York's guildhalls provide clear evidence of a building constructed as a result of a fundamental change in identity for the religious guilds involved. St. Anthony's hall was constructed shortly after the amalgamation of three religious fraternities with the chapel of St. Martin in 1446 and was therefore an important visual symbol of these guilds' new communal identity. Similarly, the construction of the new Guildhall from c.1445 symbolised the communal identities of the recently amalgamated fraternities of St. Christopher and St. George as well as formalising their existing connections with York's civic authorities.

The construction of the Corpus Christi hall also occurred at a pivotal moment in the history of the fraternity. The guild had been founded in 1408 by 'certain chaplains and other worthy parsons, both secular and regular' and was part of the widespread and powerful cult of the feast of Corpus Christi (Rubin 1986a; 1991a; Crouch 1995). During the 1460s the popularity of Corpus Christi guild had declined as a result of the involvement of some of its most prominent members in the York and Lancaster struggles (Crouch 1995, 269; YCCG, 270-271). However the guild's fortunes were transformed when Richard Duke of Gloucester joined the guild in 1477, followed by a flood

of prominent gentry and aristocracy. In 1478 the late fourteenth-century hospital foundation of St. Thomas, located just outside Micklegate Bar, also became a corporate member of the fraternity. Clear evidence for the spatial relationship between the hospital and chapel is given in a 'viewe' of St. Thomas's on 22 October 1593 (YCA B31, f. 36r), which was erroneously identified as a 'viewe of St. Anthony's hospitall' in the margins of the House Books and subsequently mis-quoted by various sources (see VCH 1961, 482). Before 1477 the fraternity had met in Trinity hall, but the construction of a new guildhall in association with the hospital and chapel of St. Thomas was therefore a highly symbolic expression of a shift in the fortunes and corporate identity of the guild.

The construction of the butchers' hall (fig. 169; Fitzell 1975) may also have been related to the political and economic fortunes of that guild in the fifteenth century. Although members of the craft often held the office of chamberlain in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Swanson notes that

Nonetheless they remained outsiders, excluded in general from civic office and characterised as a minor craft. They posed too much of a threat economically, but equally, whereas it was considered possible to make a silk purse out of a tailor, a butcher remained a sow's ear. (1989, 170-1)

The apparent exclusion of this wealthy craft from civic government throughout the medieval period requires more detailed analysis than it has previously been given. The assumption that all craftsmen automatically sought civic office, and resented exclusion from it, is problematic. The butchers' hall can be interpreted as a statement of the economic and commercial priorities of the butchers', rather than a symbol of unity in the face of political exclusion. One hundred and forty six butchers took out the freedom between 1401-50, and existing members of the trade may have used the guildhall to bind these new men into the working community and practices of the craft, or simply to maintain their collective stance against the increasing attempts of civic authority to regulate the butchery trade and stop its restrictive practices.

The cordwainers' hall in Hungate may also be interpreted as a symbolic attempt to reinforce craft identity in the face of competition with the tanners' guild over the supply of worked leather, particularly after they were banned from carrying out the tanning process by statute in 1402 and 1423 (Swanson 1989, 55). Even though some of their members were prosperous and successful craftsmen, the cordwainers were always outnumbered by the more influential tanners. A leather seld was established in the common hall in 1428 as a result of trouble between the crafts, but conflict between them continued throughout the 1450s. The construction of a guildhall may therefore have been an attempt to bind members together during this difficult period. It may also



have been an attempt to control troublesome servants and apprentices, who were meeting secretly and apparently challenging their masters' authority (YMB 1, 190-1).

It should be noted that although depictions of the haberdashers' hall, in Walmgate (fig. 171) suggest that it was in origin a medieval building, both Drake (1736, 309) and the VCH (1961, 161) record that the construction of an assembly hall for the craft occurred as a result of bequests made by Sir Robert Watter in the early seventeenth century. It is, of course possible that the haberdashers had been meeting here informally for a number of years, and possibly decades, before this, and is a subject which requires further research. Although the haberdashers became an increasingly important craft during the early sixteenth century, their numbers declined over the course of the seventeenth (VCH 1961, 127; 167). The construction or reconstruction of their hall may well have been an attempt to boost their confidence during a period of economic difficulty and professional decline.

## **Conclusion**

The fact that many religious fraternities and craft mysteries never built guildhalls is significant, for it suggests that their existing 'modes of expression' continued to function effectively throughout the later medieval period. The decision to build a guildhall was therefore a highly charged act which was inextricably linked to a community's desire to re-fashion or re-create its corporate identity within the wider civic community. The next section of this Chapter will focus on the buildings themselves, and examine the archaeological evidence for their form and function. Parallels with contemporary domestic buildings will be considered, but it will be concluded that the structure and spatial organisation of guildhalls can only be understood as part of a wider *habitus* which is found in a range of medieval building types.

### **6.2 Medieval guildhalls: the domestic parallel**

The connection between medieval domestic buildings and guildhalls seems to be supported by evidence that many guildhalls were constructed on the site of earlier medieval houses (Rigold 1968, 2-11). Schofield (1995, 212) also draws attention to several cases where London guilds visited aristocratic and episcopal domestic residences, in order to view architectural features which were subsequently copied in their halls. In 1425 for example, the drapers visited the palace of the Celestines at Sheen and the hall of the Bishop of Bath in the Strand before building their new hall in St. Swithin's Lane in 1425, and in 1496 the pewterers viewed the roofs not only of the carpenters' and haberdashers' halls, but also that of the Brotherhood of Papey and the Dean (of St. Paul's?) in Hackney before rebuilding their Lime Street hall (Schofield 1995, 198). Similarly, the merchant tailors' new kitchen roof of 1433/4 appears to have been partly modelled on that at

Kennington Palace (Schofield 1995, 224). However, it requires more than evidence of architectural emulation to establish that guildhalls were direct derivations of seigneurial architecture.

It is worth asking therefore whether the choice of the first or ground floor hall ‘type’ by guilds can shed further light on the reasons for these parallels. Current debate surrounding the first floor hall ‘type’ of domestic building is germane to this question (Meirion-Jones & Jones 1993). Blair (1993) has asserted that many of the so-called English first floor halls of c.1150-1220 are not halls at all, but two-storey stone chamber blocks originally associated with separate ground floor timber-framed halls. However, although archaeological evidence to support his hypothesis has emerged in the form of the remains of the timber-framed hall at Boothby Pagnell, we should be wary of therefore assuming that the first floor hall is therefore an historical chimera. The stratigraphic relationship of these disassociated buildings needs more careful analysis, and there are still numerous examples of twelfth- and thirteenth-century ‘first floor halls’ which were constructed alongside contemporary chamber blocks, such as the first floor hall and associated chamber block in the west and north ranges of Henry II’s townhouse in Wigford, Lincoln (Stocker 1991, 37). Contemporary parallels also survive at Scolland’s hall, Richmond Castle and the new hall built by the Bigod family at Framlingham Castle in the 1150s (Stocker 1991, 37-8).

It is difficult to be certain whether guilds consciously appropriated either the model of the ground or the first floor hall in those cases where guildhalls were simply converted domestic buildings. It is also difficult to make a functional argument for the selection of the first or ground floor hall type by guilds. Although the provision of an undercroft was a central concern for guilds seeking to accommodate hospitals in late medieval York, other undercrofts seem to have been of little importance to craft mysteries such as the shearmen in London, who simply rented theirs out (Schofield 1995, 228). Tables 3 and 4, Appendix 6 tabulate data from the London livery halls and reveals that even within one topographical context, there are no clear patterns or chronological distinctions to indicate reasons for the preference of one form over another. The evidence suggests that the form of the guildhall depended not only on its physical context and the limits imposed upon it by adjacent properties, but also on a series of complex factors relating to the institution with which it was associated.

Might the relative popularity of the first or ground floor hall in particular kinds of *domestic* buildings offer an explanation for the choice of either form by medieval guilds? Two contrasting interpretations of the first floor hall during the later medieval period are particularly germane to this question. Thompson (1995, 152) argues that there was a rise in the popularity of this form

from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, citing examples of first floor halls in towers at Tattershall, Lincolnshire and Ashby de la Zouche, Leicestershire and the rebuilding of older halls at Kenilworth, Warwickshire (1347) and Portchester, Hampshire (1390s). He suggests that the expansion of the late medieval household prompted

an increasing preference for first-floor halls on the grounds of comfort and possibly to provide an overflow for the household below, and secondly a retreat from the household altogether to create a smaller separate establishment still linked to the household. (Thompson 1995, 155)

In contrast, Wood (1965, 28) maintains that there were remarkably few first floor halls constructed in the fourteenth century, but notes that those which were built were often high status episcopal, monastic or aristocratic halls which afforded their owners opportunities for prominent display. Examples such as Ely Cathedral Abbey, the Bishop's Palace at St. David's, Pembrokeshire, the Abbot's Hall in Westminster and domestic complexes such as Kenilworth are also cited. Wood's emphasis on the display function of the first floor hall provides a more convincing explanation of its particular popularity with guilds. As well as offering a flexible space which could accommodate a *maison dieu*, chapel or simply storage space, the undercroft physically elevated the hall to a visually prominent position within the courtyard in which it was situated.

Wood's hypothesis appears to be supported by the sheer scale of many urban guildhalls in relation to contemporary domestic buildings. Table 5, Appendix 6 plots contemporary examples of domestic buildings drawn from Wood (1965) and from Sandall's (1975; 1986) lists of aisled halls published in *Vernacular Architecture*. Most of these examples are drawn from rural seigneurial sites, but tables 6 and 7 also list comparative ecclesiastical and monastic examples, and table 7 collegiate buildings. It is particularly significant that, in terms of sheer scale and the number of bays, the closest parallels for the York guildhalls and the London Livery Company halls are the halls of a group of elaborate courtyard houses of the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including Kenilworth (late fourteenth century), Dartington (c.1388-1400), South Wingfield Manor (1440-59), Gainsborough Old Hall (c.1470-84) and Rufford Old Hall (c.1500).

These parallels are also significant because, like these buildings, guildhalls were often associated with gatehouse and courtyard complexes. This meant that the full architectural splendour of the guildhall itself was only visible to those with the status and/or confidence to negotiate access through the gatehouse to the hall itself. Although evidence for the medieval appearance of the

gatehouses of St. John the Baptist's and Trinity halls no longer survives, there is good historical evidence for their former existence. At St. John the Baptist's hall, the gatehouse was a two-bay, two storey structure with a chamber over the gate (MTA 5/1) which was demolished as late as c.1702-3. There are clear references to 'pavyng the entre to the halle warde' at Trinity hall dating to 1433-4 (YMA, 38) and to the 'hallgat' in accounts of 1679-82 (YMA, 291). The structure appears to have extensively remodelled in both the mid seventeenth, and the present century. The York Guildhall was also set back within a courtyard entered through the 'Common Hall gates' which partly lie under the present Mansion House, whilst some form of gate also appears on illustrations of St. Thomas' hospital and the hall of the Corpus Christi guild. Although the guildhalls themselves dominated these courtyards, a secondary visual focus of these complexes was the guild hospital. The *maisons dieu* of both St. John the Baptist's guild and St. Christopher and St. George's guild were located in structurally separate buildings which abutted or were adjacent to the hall entrance itself, whilst at Trinity hall the hospital entrance dominated the ground floor and was situated almost directly underneath the first floor entrance to the hall.

### **6.3 Guildhalls and the craft tradition**

Although the visual and ceremonial potential of the first floor hall form might explain its relative popularity with guilds, the wider structural and symbolic links between the two buildings demand closer attention because they involve questions about the use and meaning of these buildings. The decision to use a particular structure and spatial organisation can either be seen as a product of the craft tradition, or as a conscious emulation of other building types by the guilds as patrons of these buildings. This is significant, because there is a tendency for the medieval building craft tradition' to be seen as an innately conservative, reactionary industry grounded in the practical business of materials and construction. The lack of evidence for a self-conscious architectural profession has therefore resulted in considerable emphasis being placed on architectural patrons, who are seen as dynamic and creative forces. The contrast between these two modes of working is drawn by Harvey,

Building, with all its component skills such as masonry, carpentry, glazing, is a collective technique taught by the members of one generation to those of the next. It may be greatly modified in the course of time by the discovery of new materials or the invention of improved methods, but those changes come from outside. Architecture, however, is not simply the control and supervision of buildings; its primary function is the creation of fresh solutions to fresh problems posed by patrons who wish to have not standardised but specially designed works put up in answer to their requirements. (Harvey 1975a, 2; 1958).

So are guildhalls simply the product of building craftsmen whose lack of imagination resulted in the simple adaptation of the domestic building type? Or are they the result of an active and conscious decision on the part of medieval fraternities or guilds? In order to answer this question it is necessary to consider the craft tradition in York, and to explore the links between the construction techniques and the social function of medieval buildings.

Public building projects by ecclesiastical, monastic and civic authorities in later medieval York provided a market for the skills of established and itinerant craftsmen from both the masonry and carpentry trades (Harvey 1975a; 1975b; Morrell 1950; Gee 1979). This included the rebuilding of the Norman nave of the Minster (completed by *c.*1360), and the choir and towers (which continued well into the fifteenth century). At least eight of York's parish churches were also extensively remodelled during this period, and there was continuous building activity at the monastic sites of St. Mary's Abbey, St. Leonard's hospital, and the various city friaries (RCHME 1981; VCH 1961; Raine 1955). Civic construction projects were also numerous. Although the city walls were largely completed by *c.*1315 (RCHME 1972, 13), the Fishergate-Walmgate section was still under construction well into the fourteenth century, as were parts of the bars and barbicans. Work on the Ouse and Foss bridges and their associated chapels and chambers

continued throughout the period, alongside the Guildhall itself from c.1445 onwards. There were also corporate or collegiate building works such as the Bedern and St. William's College, and to this one must add the hundreds of private commissions of shops and houses which comprise the larger part of the surviving medieval building stock of York.

The most coherent study of York's craft mysteries has been Swanson's (1983; 1989) collation of data from guild ordinances, contracts, civic records and probate evidence. The York building industry was divided into four major groups: the carpenters, masons, plasterers and tilers. Most of these crafts included large numbers of itinerant journeymen as well as established master craftsmen with workshops and apprentices. The itinerancy of the craft of masonry may well explain the lack of a formal guild but many masons established themselves within the civic community by taking out the freedom (Swanson 1983, 9-10). Moreover even the itinerant masons inhabiting the 'lodge' may have been informally associated with the masons' fraternity which was responsible for the Herod play of the Corpus Christi cycle. In contrast to the masons, the carpenters had a highly complex mystery incorporating the specialised groups of the carpenters, joiners, carvers, cartwrights and shipwrights. Although these divisions may have been blurred in practice, a clear distinction was always maintained between the carpenters and the sawyers, perhaps because of the latter's specialised knowledge of timber selection and woodland management. The succession of carpenters' ordinances registered in the Memorandum Books certainly suggests that the mystery responded swiftly to changes in the demand for different carpentry skills (Swanson 1989, 86).

Two other building professions, the plasterers and tilers, also deserve attention. The use of thin, edge-set bricks known as 'walltiles' or 'thaktile', as infill panels for timber-framing may well explain the close connection of the tilers and the plasters in York. These 'walteghill' were also used in the construction of entire walls, as in the undercroft of Trinity hall between 1358-67 and at York Castle in 1364 (Salzman 1952, 141) and had become the most common roofing material in York by the fourteenth century (Swanson 1983, 20; RCHME 1981, *xcvi*). However the two crafts maintained distinct identities throughout the medieval period and were responsible for separate plays in the Corpus Christi cycle. Tile works were established by the Carmelite friars in Bakener's Lane, Walmgate in the fourteenth century, whilst the Vicars Choral had two fifteenth-century works; one in Spitalcroft, Layerthorpe, and one on the south-west side of the Ouse between Blossom Street and the river (RCHME 1981, *xcvi*). The increasing use of brick as a building material in fifteenth century York is evidenced by the construction of the Red Tower, Walmgate and brick extensions to buildings such as the King's Manor. Tilers were also responsible for the

construction of central hearths such as that now reconstructed at Barley Hall, York, and both plasterers and tilers became involved in the construction of chimney stacks (Swanson 1983, 21).

The association of crafts such as the glaziers and plumbers with building construction is also significant. Ecclesiastical work in late medieval York by the glaziers has received considerable attention (O'Connor 1977). In domestic buildings windows were usually closed with wooden shutters or horn panels, but glass windows were commissioned at Trinity hall in 1477 and 1504 (RCHME 1981, *lxxv*) and glass was increasingly used for domestic windows from the sixteenth century onwards. The plumbers, who worked with lead for roofs, gutters and perhaps, windows, were closely associated with both the glazing and tiling trades, but there is no evidence of formal plumbers' mystery in the later medieval period.

Much of the construction and repair work carried out by the various building crafts was executed either by journeymen or through household-based workshops rather than the craft 'guild system'. However, craft mysteries were not simply bodies which organised craft production, but rather social and political organisations which gave expression to the specialist skills and wider interests shared by their members (Salaman 1986, 80). Their success lay in their recognition of the flexibility and fluidity of the late medieval labour market (particularly the itinerant building trades), their acknowledgement of the tensions and rivalries which might develop within it, and their provision of a private forum in which the knowledge and 'mystery' of the craft could be disseminated. Rather than being innately conservative, it is likely that the craft mysteries were melting pots for the exchange of practical ideas and innovation (Epstein 1991, 247). In conclusion, existing work on the York guilds, and on the craft tradition in general, has therefore resulted in a wealth of descriptive information about the organisation, materials and techniques of the late medieval building trade. Far less attention has been paid to the ways in which building construction related to the actual use of buildings, but York's guildhalls can only really be understood if this dichotomy is broken down.

The construction and spatial organisation of buildings is intimately related to their social meaning. Chapter 1 has discussed this in relation to R. Harris' (1989) 'grammar of carpentry'; a structuralist, linguistic analogy which identifies four 'rules' underpinning a 'way of building' by medieval carpenters. These include issues of technological competence which closely parallel Sackett's (1990, 33) understanding of 'isochrestic choice', where the selection of one option by the craft tradition from many equivalent alternatives is interpreted as being largely dictated by

‘the technological traditions within which they have been encultured as members of the social groups that delineate their ethnicity’. However Harris is also concerned with the visual cues by which the meaning and use of buildings was communicated. This ‘mental mapping’ is most easily understood through the idea of *habitus* -the unconscious knowledge and sense of order which an individual possesses about how to ‘go on’ in life and operate in society. Bourdieu (1977) emphasises that this knowledge is learned implicitly, particularly through the physical and spatial arrangement of the built environment, and thus emphasises the dialectical relationship between social practice and the material culture. These ideas enable us to break down the dichotomy outlined above by seeing the form of a building as the product of a *habitus* shared by both craftsmen and the patron/user. The ‘grammar’ of carpentry can therefore be understood not simply as a set of techniques passed through the craft tradition, but as a culturally specific form of social practice. The next section of this chapter will therefore focus on the grammar of the York guildhalls and the *habitus* which operated in a range of medieval buildings.



#### **6.4 Guildhalls, grammar and *habitus***

The development of the domestic tripartite plan has been discussed in considerable detail by Wood (1965), Girouard (1978) Thompson (1995) and Grenville (1997). Although thirteenth-century domestic planning was fairly eclectic, by 1300 the division of the main body of the hall from a service end by means of a cross passage was becoming more widespread (Grenville 1997, 96). By the end of the fourteenth century the fully developed tripartite plan was well established, with the ‘low’ service end (often with a projecting, separately roofed service wing) at one end of the hall, and a ‘high’ end with a raised dais at the opposite end (often with a parlour, or a projecting, separately roofed solar wing beyond). The tripartite arrangement is found in both urban and rural contexts in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and Pantin’s (1962-3) study is specifically concerned with the adaptation of this form to the topographical constraints of the medieval town. Recent research has refined our understanding of this process by placing emphasis on those urban buildings which did not contain open halls, particularly two-storey commercial properties (Harris forthcoming), or those lower down the social scale (Schofield 1994, 72-74). However, members of the craft tradition would still have been familiar with the tripartite form from their experience of living and working in these buildings over time.

The tripartite division of the open hall created a hierarchical space in which the relative social status of members of the medieval household could be expressed. It contains a horizontal hierarchy structured through the separation of the ‘high’ end of the hall which usually contained a raised dais, from the ‘low end’ which contained service rooms such as the buttery and pantry. The low end was often separated from the rest of the hall by moveable or fixed screens and a narrow entrance bay which became known as the ‘screens passage’. This is of significance because a spatial hierarchy was also structured by the east-west division of contemporary medieval ecclesiastical and monastic buildings (Cook 1954; Radding and Clark 1992). This division was familiar to the craft tradition because it was one which they experienced every Sunday in the parish church. Both these arrangements can therefore be understood as a form of *habitus*; a way of organising space to structure social relations which was communicated through visual cues encoded in the physical structure and spatial organisation of medieval buildings. These ‘cues’ can be conceptualised following Rapoport’s (1982; 1990) schematic subdivision of the built environment into ‘fixed-feature elements’ (buildings, floors, walls etc.), ‘semi-fixed-feature elements’ (furnishings, interiors and exteriors) and ‘non-fixed-feature elements’ (people, their activities and behaviour).

Access analysis diagrams for the York halls emphasise the importance of a ‘carrier space’ outside the guildhall itself, usually located in an enclosed courtyard from which the visitor could enter the hospital/chapel directly, or take a further access route to the hall (fig. 174). From this position the visitor was also faced with the first visual cues encoded within the fixed-feature elements of the timber frame. The exterior longitudinal elevations of Trinity hall (see figs. 4; 18-19) articulated the internal tripartite division of the open hall. The screens passage bay was narrower than the other bays of the hall and was emphasised by the position of the porch at first floor level which gave the visitor access to a further ‘carrier space’ between the services and the guildhall itself. In contrast the dais bay was slightly longer, with a more substantial windows emphasising the position of the high end of the hall. The external articulation of the tripartite arrangement thus provided the visitor with important visual cues about the space he/she was about to enter, allowing him/her to recognise and the *habitus* operating within the hall. Although the guildhall courtyard could therefore be a ‘front’ region during particular moments of guild ritual or ceremony, on a day-to-day basis it could also be a ‘back’ region in which the individuals gained composure and ontological security before entering the hall (after Giddens 1995).

### **Guildhalls: fixed elements**

The screens passage bay was not only slightly narrower than the other bays of the guildhall but was also often ceiled over, creating a dark and enclosed space lit by candles or rush lights. This was commonly associated with the provision of a gallery over the screens passage as at Trinity, St. Anthony’s and the Guildhall, or with the floor of a first floor chamber, as at St. John the Baptist’s (see above Chapters 3, 4 and 5). The screens passage was also separated by screens such as the moveable example at St. John the Baptist’s hall which was subsequently removed and donated by the Company to St. Crux in 1692 (see above p. 87), or by fixed partitions such as that recorded in 1611 at St. Anthony’s and the example which survived at Trinity hall until earlier this century (fig. 6 see above p. 104 and 61). Parallels for screens and associated galleries are well known from domestic buildings (Wood 1965, 143). Both buildings therefore incorporated fixed-features which could be used to stage ceremonial entrances, particularly when these were enhanced by ‘audio cues’ such as the music played in the galleries of these halls.

The use of bays was both a structural system through which loads from individual architectural elements were transmitted to the principal posts and tie beams, and a spatial division which divided the hall into a series of compartmentalised spaces which were intimately related to the overall plan of the building (Harris 1989, 4). This was enhanced by other aspects of the ‘grammar of carpentry’, particularly the placing of the fair face of timber towards the dais. It is also

significant that the construction sequence indicated by carpenters' marks at both Trinity and St. Anthony's halls indicate that the dais ends were the first parts of the frame to be laid out (see p. 62; 83; 103-4) at St. John the Baptist's this was superseded by the fact that the low end of the fraternity hall abutted an existing building). Evidence in the wall plates suggests that there was more substantial fenestration at the dais ends of Trinity and St. Anthony's halls. These may have paralleled contemporary domestic examples such as those reconstructed at Barley Hall and 49-51 Goodramgate in York (fig. 121), or comparable oriel windows known from the London Livery halls. The level and visual effect of light streaming through these windows would have varied according to the time of day and season, and could have been emphasised through the shuttering of other lights as well as the location of braziers or rush lights elsewhere in the hall.

Visual emphasis was also placed on the dais end by the roof trusses of the York guildhalls (see p. 62-63; 84-86; 103-4). At Trinity hall crown posts were placed on alternate tie beams (fig. 6), drawing the eye immediately towards the dais bay, which was framed by crown posts with cusped braces. Crown posts were the most popular form of roof truss used in fourteenth and fifteenth century York and at both Trinity and St. Anthony's are used in conjunction with cusped kerb principles. At the latter site however visual emphasis was created by an enclosed ceiling beneath the crown posts and over the dais end, a design which parallels the insertion of 'canopies' over the east ends of contemporary parish churches. St. John the Baptist's hall also appears to have had crown posts but these were probably closer to examples such as nos. 28-32 Coppergate, 16-22 Coney Street and no. 2 Coffee Yard (Barley Hall) with raking struts to the common rafter (fig. 121). The use of arch-braced collar construction in the second phase of St. Anthony's hall and in the later replacement trusses at St. John the Baptist's therefore reflects a clear development in the style and aesthetic. At both sites the arch braces are elaborately moulded, but whereas those at St. Anthony's create a graceful sweeping arc from the wall post to the collar, those at St. John the Baptist's are less aesthetically pleasing owing to the fact that the braces are pieced around existing tie beams. St. Anthony's appears to be the earliest surviving example of the use of arch brace collar construction in the city of York. A similar late fifteenth-century example survives at St. William's College, and the decision to reconstruct St. John the Baptist's may well have been taken shortly after both these roof trusses were erected in the immediate vicinity.

Crown posts are usually associated with the 'regional dialect' or styles of the 'lowland zones' of the south and east of England whilst the arch braces are more often associated with the 'highland' or western school of carpentry (Harris 1993; Smith 1965). This is significant because the addition of close studding to the exterior of Trinity hall also emphasised its stylistic connection to buildings in the south and east. Does the shift from crown posts to arch braces in the mid-later

fifteenth century reflect a different emphasis in the craft tradition? Arch braces are known to have been used in late fifteenth-century buildings in the west of the region such as at Horbury Hall (RCHME 1986, 201) where the intermediate trusses are of an arch-braced form, and at Calverley Hall, Pudsey (RCHME 1986, 193) whose hall contains a ‘false hammer beam’ with arch braces (fig. 175). It is possible that carpenters who had worked on these buildings in the west of the county immigrated to York, or were exchanging their knowledge in some way with the York guild. But it is also significant that this was a period in which particular parts of the cloth production industry were shifting to West Yorkshire. It is therefore also possible that the architectural products of this area’s increased prosperity were being copied by the patrons or craftsmen associated with the York guildhalls. The insertion of arch braces in St. John the Baptist’s hall is a clear example of competitive emulation between the York guilds, but it may also reflect a desire on the part of both of these guilds to project a sense of communal confidence during a period of economic recession and insecurity.

French (1994) has drawn attention to stylistic parallels (particularly the compartmentalisation of the roof and use of roof bosses) between the roof of St. Anthony’s and other late fifteenth-century roofs at the Guildhall (c. 1458) and All Saints’ North Street (c. 1470) credited to the carpenter John Foulford (Harvey 1984, 11). Closer examination of the connections between these buildings is impossible owing to the destruction of the Guildhall roof (along with St. Anthony’s hall bosses which had been removed there) in 1942 (fig. 176; Morrell 1950, 93). There are however surviving bosses in the aisles of St. Anthony’s (see p. 94). Although Chapter 5 has rejected their supposed link with the structural sequence of the hall, there may be some significance in the contrast between the heraldic, religious and civic images of the bosses in the north-west aisle and the more prosaic animals and ‘Green Man’ figures in the south-east aisle (fig. 177). As in contemporary parish churches, the north aisle may have been paid for or been used by particular groups within the amalgamated fraternity. This would parallel the arrangements in medieval parish churches such as St. Michael’s, Coventry where aisles were grafted onto the church by the various trade guilds in the city (Cook 1947, 20-24). It certainly suggests that transverse as well as vertical hierarchies were being structured within the guildhall.

### **Guildhalls: semi-fixed and non-fixed elements**

So far attention has focussed on the ‘fixed-features’ of the York guildhalls, but is also their ‘semi-fixed’ and ‘non-fixed’ elements which allow us to explore their use, and it is this social practice which forms the essence of *habitus*. The lack of medieval records for St. John the Baptist and St. Anthony’s guilds places considerable emphasis on those of the fraternity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and the mystery of mercers (YMA; YMAA). Two kinds

of record will be used to approach the issue: inventories and accounts which refer to material culture and ceremony, and craft ordinances, which provide evidence of the activities of guild meetings. It is worth highlighting the fact that it is by no means clear exactly how Trinity and St. John the Baptist's halls were shared between the religious fraternities who built them and the secular mysteries with which they became associated in the fifteenth century. A clear administrative and financial distinction continued to be made between the two associations at Trinity hall, even after the formal incorporation of the mystery of mercers in 1430. Guild officers reiterated this distinction (YMA, 66-7; 99) and the mystery and fraternity continued to use separate seals. However the structural division of guildhalls should not be read as evidence that the activities of the fraternity became confined to guild hospitals and chapels, whilst the 'secular' mysteries took over the use of their halls. There was a considerable overlap in the membership of these associations, and the religious fraternity appears to have continued to meet in halls for ceremonial and administrative purposes (see YMA, xxii; 66-7).

The 1495 ordinances of the mercers' mystery ordered their members to be 'lele and trewe brother into the hospitale of the holy Trinite; of Our Lady Seint Mary and xii apostles' and emphasised that 'ye sall worship iij solempne festes, that is to say, the feste of the Trinite, Assumpcionis, and Annunciacionis of our Lady' in Trinity hall (YMA, 90). There was a particular concentration of ritual activity in York's guildhalls at this time of the year. Trinity Sunday was a moveable feast falling on the Sunday next after Pentecost (the seventh Sunday after Easter). But the Thursday next after Trinity Sunday was also the feast of Corpus Christi, in which all the guilds of late medieval York were heavily involved. The latest date on which Corpus Christi could fall was 24th June, which also happened to be the feast of St. John the Baptist; whilst that of St. Anthony was the 13th June. Therefore although York's ceremonial year does not appear to have been divided into a 'ritual' and 'secular' half (Phythian-Adams 1972), the period between Trinity Sunday and Corpus Christi must have been a highly charged round of ritual activities in and outside the guildhall.

These feasts were marked at Trinity hall by a supper at which bread, wine, ale and a variety of meat including pork, chicken, lamb and calves' feet were provided for members. Details of expenditure feature in numerous account rolls, including that of 1433-4, when twenty shillings were paid to the master Nicholas Louth and John Burnley, 'for a soper made on Trinite Sondag at even' (YMA, 69). By the later fifteenth century an annual Venison feast had been added to this round of paraliturgical ceremonies (YMA, 69). This food was presumably prepared in the kitchens which are known to have existed at Trinity, St. John the Baptist's and St. Anthony's halls. In 1433 a 'rerdose in the kechyn' at Trinity hall was made at a cost of five pence (YMA, 38;

see p. 66-7) and cooking vessels including brass pots ‘a lang brandrith with vj feit’ and a ‘greit stane mortar’ were also listed in 1495 (YMA, 87). The kitchen of St. John the Baptist’s is mentioned in ecclesiastical cause papers in c.1441 when it was the location for a test of the alleged impotency of John Savage (BIHR, CP. F.224; see p. 83). Early seventeenth-century records also refer to a kitchen and chamber above at St. Anthony’s hall (YCA, YC/G).

Fraternity feasts were occasions in which guilds could display their control over ‘allocative resources’, which included the finances and foodstuffs necessary for holding the feast, and those aspects of material culture, including the guildhall, involved in its successful reproduction, and ‘authoritative resources’, which generated command over other guild members and the social practices in which they were engaged (Giddens 1984, 32). But the fraternity feast did more than reflect the power of the guild elite. It facilitated the negotiation of social and political relationships by creating a *locale* in which there was considerable potential for social encounters between members. The archaeological evidence therefore supports Rosser’s (1994, 433) argument that the fraternity feast was not simply a ceremony designed to reinforce an idealised sense of community between members, or construct harmony in an unreflective, static way, but a ritual process in which social and political relations were actively negotiated and through which prestige and dignity was conveyed to its participants. The ‘regionalisation’ of the guildhalls was deliberately manipulated to facilitate these encounters and evoke a paraliturgical symbolism between the fraternity feast and the practices of the mass.

The fraternity feast usually followed a service in a nearby church or guild chapel. The celebration of mass would have created an initial focus of attention on the chapel, whose spatial constraints must have limited the numbers able to gain physical and visual access to the elevation of the Host. This ritual must also have foregrounded those hospitals which were associated with chapels, transforming them into ‘front’ regions during the ceremony, and disclosing the normally enclosed bodies of the poor to the public gaze of the fraternity or mystery. The shift of activity through the ritual procession of the guild elite from the chapel to the dais end of the guildhall would have made a powerful symbolic link not only between the paraliturgical qualities of the feast and the Mass, but also the guild elite and the community of the Apostles. This ritual activity transformed the *guildhall* into a ‘front region’ and was clearly designed to re-emphasise the paraliturgical parallels between the guildhall and the parish church.

It is impossible fully to reconstruct the original appearance of the interiors of the York guildhalls, because so much of the ephemeral material culture associated with them has disappeared, and because inventories only tend to focus on the most precious items curated by the guild. However,

it is clear that the status of particular groups within the fraternity, especially that of the guild elite, was emphasised through the seating of members within the hall. Contemporary records of the London guilds suggest that the guild elite were normally seated at the dais end of the hall whilst the rest of the fraternity or mystery were accommodated on benches around the sides (Rosser 1994, 444). An undated but probably mid sixteenth-century inventory from Trinity hall (YMA, 97-8) indicates the provision of substantial furniture at the dais end. The inventory lists two 'bordes' and five trestles 'for the dece', which suggests one long table pitched in the centre of the dais end. It also refers to five 'mete bourdes for the south side with trestles' and seven 'fourmes', or chairs and four 'mete bourdes of the north side of the hall'. This must have been enhanced by other aspects of the 'semi-fixed' elements of guildhalls, such as the tapestry or painted 'hallyng of pykture belonging to the hy deyesse' of Trinity hall in 1488 (YMA, 87; Kightly 1998, 27-31).

The status of the guild elite was also emphasised through their use of elaborate napery and eating vessels for the feast, such as the dishes, saucers, tablecloths and towels listed as the contents of a 'greite arke' in Trinity hall in 1488 (YMA, 96). Account rolls of 1493 also refer to payments for pewter 'dublers, dishis, et salceres' (YMA, 84). Two old Minute Books of the tailors' transcribed by Camidge (MTA 2/2) also list a variety of diaper and table cloths, flagons, 'puder [pewter], driblows', as well as a considerable quantity of plate, and a number of wine bowls, some of which may have dated to the fifteenth century. A note at the end of an inventory from 1488 that 'master Steffallay changed all the wessells before wrettyn in hys tyme att meclems [Michaelmas]' (YMA, 87) suggests that successive Masters competed to provide these moveable aspects of material culture.

Although my interpretation of the use of the hall during these ceremonial occasions is conjectural, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the hierarchies encoded in the fixed and semi-fixed elements of the hall were also reproduced in the appearance, movement and seating of guild members. The visual distinction created by the seating of the guild elite at the dais end of the guildhall must have been greatly enhanced by their costly gowns and hoods, which are recorded in contemporary account rolls. In 1433 twenty four shillings and ten pence was spent on cloth for hoods (YMA, 39). The following year sixteen pence was spent on 'plonket cloth' for the hoods of Thomas Cleveland and Thomas Ward, three shillings and two pence for that of William Grandon, as well as six shillings and eight pence for a gown for Sir William Ottley, the Master of the hospital. The quality of these hoods and gowns is indicated by the description of Ottley's 'great gown furred with white' c.1394-1435 (YMA, 41-3). A concern with personal appearance and appropriate dress can also be detected in other sections of the fraternal community; a legitimate excuse for not attending guild feasts appears to have been a lack of appropriate dress. Just as the social hierarchy

of the parish was embedded in the seating of the parish church, so an individual's position within the guildhall may have reflected his status not only within the craft, but also within the wider civic community. It is interesting to speculate in this respect whether masters, their wives and apprentices were seated together representing the household unit, or separately, reflecting the hierarchy of the workshop.

A similar use of the guildhall to create particular levels of social hierarchy and status is evident in the more mundane business meeting of guilds. All members of the mercers' mystery, for example, were required to appear before 'ten of belle at Trinite halle' for business meetings such as the 'court day' (YMA, 38), and fines were imposed on those who failed to attend. These were occasions when the 'mystery' of the craft could be discussed, standards established, and trading agreements made. They were also occasions when those individuals found breaking the mystery's ordinances were reported and/or prosecuted before their peers. Such activities undoubtedly reinforced the authority of the masters, constables and the searchers over the rest of the guild. However there were also times when smaller numbers of guild members met together for more private business discussions such as those relating to the mercers' charter and seal in 1435-6:

diverse costages and expenses made to diverse persones at Trinite halle for inquisition made with prestes, and in other places iijs. *vd.* Item, in diverse costages and expenses made be diverse tymes to diverse wurthy men of lawe and others assembled at diverse tymes to hafe thaire wyse counsaile and information, of diverse matters touching the cumpany for thaire most profit and availe ijli. xjs. viijd. (YMA, 45)

It is unclear exactly which part of the hall was used for this type of business meeting. But during the fifteenth century there was a marked expansion in the material culture of record keeping and the provision of administrative space by York's guilds. Payments of six shillings and eight pence were made by the mercers in 1436-7 for a 'kyste bunden with iren' (YMA, 47) which was provided with keys in 1438 (YMA, 50). By c.1554 the guild had not only this chest, 'bow[nd] with iron 'for evydence' but another 'iryndbound kist of Pruce makyng'. In 1554 these items were recorded as being 'in the tresour house' (YMA, 98), and this parallels contemporary references to the 'counting' or 'counsel' house at St. John the Baptist's hall which may have been in origin a fifteenth-century building (see p. 88-90). It should be remembered however, that even though these spaces, and other areas of the hall such as the hospital, might be considered 'back regions' (Giddens 1984, 127), there may still have been a considerable concern by the guild elite to maintain particular forms of behaviour in front of their social inferiors operating 'behind the scenes'.



The guildhall was a paradox; an open space which appeared to symbolise the corporate, communal identity of the fraternity, but one which also structured internal hierarchies and power relations. However, these ideas were not at odds, for a ritual such as the fraternity feast

derived its public and ecclesiastical sanction from subscriptions to hierarchical values prevalent in the wider social world yet whose social encounters.....  
acquired both their legitimacy and their prestige from the informing rhetoric of community. (Rosser 1994, 444)

The fraternity feast provided a series of spatial and temporal moments where the idea of community could be taken apart, debated, and reconstructed within the safety of the guildhall itself. It provided a discursive space in which the fraternal rhetoric of charity and harmony could co-exist with an acknowledgement of the inevitable tensions and instabilities which might occur between members. Moreover the co-presence and social encounters facilitated within guildhalls provided all members with mechanisms through which their social identity and status could be negotiated, and new social and political relations forged (Rosser 1997, 9-10; Hicks 1990). The guildhall was a *locale* in which different social groups, including the household, the neighbourhood, the workshop, the craft and the wider civic community overlapped. It was therefore a resource in which identities could be structured at the boundaries of social groups, and where guild members from across the social scale could attempt to improve their social and economic position.

This was particularly important for women. Swanson (1989) and Kowaleski and Bennett (1989) have maintained that women were largely excluded from guilds, and note that although widows were entitled to take over the workshops of their deceased husbands and could technically therefore hold guild office, they rarely appear to have done so in practice. However, we must be wary of simply presuming that guilds and guildhalls were simply mechanisms through which the patriarchal values of medieval society were reproduced. Future research might explore the historical evidence for the active use of these buildings by the female members of religious guilds and craft mysteries. It is possible that guildhalls provided some women with a space in which their public reputation and complex social identities could be structured not only on the basis of their gender or familial status, but also their professional skills (Goldberg 1992; Howell 1986).

Guildhall also had an important role in the initiation of new guild members and apprentices into the community following the fraternity feast (Rosser 1994, 435-6). The York mercers' ordinances of 1495 stipulated that any master setting up a new shop or warehouse was to register before the company in Trinity hall (YMA, 91), and that every new apprentice was to be brought before the master, constables and the rest of the company 'att Trinite hall' to swear 'uppon a bouke, that he

sall be gode and trewe to his maister' (YMA, 94). These were not simply oaths of fraternal rhetoric but very practical mechanisms designed to link the individual to the established working practices of the craft as well as the normative values of civic society. They therefore worked as much in the interests of individual craftsmen as in the corporate interests of the craft itself. Such an intention may well have lain behind the cordwainers' concern in c.1431 (YMB 1, 190-1; see p. 119) that their servants and apprentices were meeting in illicit conventicles at the Friars (probably the Carmelite Friars in Hungate). The subsequent construction of their guildhall may have been intended to bring these inevitable tensions into the discursive space of the craft itself.

Guild ordinances placed considerable emphasis on the individual's responsibility to maintain an appropriate level of behaviour and personal respectability in his own conduct and that of his household, and also towards his fellow brethren (Rawcliffe 1991; Bennett 1992). The provision of practical mechanisms of arbitration between members was designed to ease the inevitable tensions between members, but also to maintain the public image and dignity of the guild or craft in the eyes of the wider civic community. For example the York mercers attempted to ensure that members in conflict with each other sought the arbitration of the fraternal or craft community before resorting to prosecution before the law. In 1495 they imposed a fine of *6s 8d* on those who

fer any old wreth or newe hangying betwen hym and another of the company,  
callyng hym fals, or lye hym, and fall at debate with him in the mercery, or in eny  
other place of the cite. (YMA, 92)

It was considered particularly offensive if the member 'fall at debate with any man of his feliship in the maister presence, constables beyng in the Trinite hall, or call hyme fals, or lye him in violence' (YMA, 92). McRee (1987; 1992) has suggested that this attempt at social control and concern with public image was part of a wider culture of late medieval society:

Gild behavioural statutes were part of a code of conduct that the upper ranks of urban society of late medieval England imposed upon itself...They knew that urban life had always been and would always be a game of appearances. Respectable behaviour was simply part of the game. (McRee 1987, 118)

## Conclusion

This section has demonstrated that although there are strong parallels between guildhalls and domestic buildings, guildhalls are not simply derived from medieval house types, and have strong connections with a wide range of other buildings, particularly parish churches. It has been suggested that these parallels are not simply a 'grammar' of building but evidence of *habitus* - a way of structuring social identity and relations through the organisation of the built environment

and the use of material culture. This *habitus* operated at the level of practical consciousness in the minds of both the men and women who built and used guildhalls. It has been argued that guildhalls provided a mechanism through which forms of individual and communal medieval social identity could be structured in tension with each other. However, it must be remembered that the inclusive sense of collective identity constructed within the guildhall also created a boundary of *exclusion* which stressed the distinction of fraternities and guilds from other sections of the urban populace. It is to the use of guildhalls to impose particular forms of identity on individuals within these marginal communities that this chapter now turns.

### 6.5 Guild hospitals: the communities of the living and the dead

This section will explore the archaeological evidence of York's guild hospitals and chapels in relation to the framing of the bodies of the poor, and to the construction of links between the fraternal communities of the living and the dead. It will suggest that the spiritual labour of the poor was transformed into symbolic capital by guilds through the creation of chantry communities within guild hospitals. These institutions enabled guild members to internalise their acts of charity in a period of economic decline during which the discourses of charity and eschatology were being transformed. Particular emphasis will be placed on understanding the material and spatial mechanisms through which hospital inmates were incorporated into the intercessory practices and rituals of the guild chapel. In this way it will be argued that the spiritual fraternity of the dead was also used to reinforce the social and political status of existing fraternity and guild members. The section will therefore conclude by re-emphasising the ways in which medieval religious ideology and practice was used by guilds to structure and reinforce secular status and power.

Guild hospitals, like medieval hospitals more generally, have received little coherent archaeological attention (Gilchrist 1992, 102). Despite important archaeological monographs on particular sites (Rigold 1964; Price 1979; Harrison 1980; Smith 1980; Richards 1989; Durham 1991; Cardwell 1993), the only synthetic analyses of these institutions tend to be historical studies derived from documentary sources. Clay (1909) for example is primarily concerned with the religious and pious aspects of medieval hospitals and Seymour (1947) their administrative history. Useful historical contributions to the field include Rubin's (1987; 1989; 1994) analysis of the relationship between hospitals, poor relief and economic conditions in Cambridge, Rawcliffe's (1984) study of the links between London's hospitals and charitable provision, and Cullum's (1990; 1994) analyses of Yorkshire hospitals and *maisons dieu*. However these focus on the history rather than the archaeology of medieval hospitals, as do two recent synthetic overviews of the subject by Granshaw & Porter (1989) and Orme & Webster (1995). The most useful study for the archaeology of medieval hospitals is therefore still Knowles and Hadcock's (1971) gazetteer of 1,103 hospitals in medieval England and Wales, and its recent consideration by Gilchrist (1994b; 1995). This divides hospitals into four different types: the leper hospital, the almshouse, hospices for wayfarers and pilgrims, and those which cared for the long term sick or poor. Two architectural gazetteers on almshouses (Godfrey 1955) and hospitals (Prescott 1992) add regional detail to this typology, whilst Siraisi (1990) and Rawcliffe (1997) provide important contextual information on medieval medical practice and treatment.

Guild hospitals and *maisons dieu* have considerable parallels with almshouses, although some were also designed to care for the long term sick or poor. Associations between hospitals and guilds in the mid to later thirteenth century are known from St. John Thetford and Holy Cross Stratford, but most of the evidence of this type of connection in both rural and urban contexts dates to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Orme & Webster (1995, 143) suggest that religious fraternities founded almshouses as ‘good works’ and cite examples such as the hospital of the guild of Charity and St. John (1442) which became known as ‘Papey’ in London, urban almshouses such as St. Roche in Exeter, Trinity in Hull and Worcester and Corpus Christi in York and smaller provincial houses such as Brentford, Pilton, Sherborne and Yeovil. A clear distinction is drawn by these authors between these religious foundations and those almshouses founded by craft or mercantile guilds including that of the vintners (c.1357), the merchant tailors (c.1404), the grocers (c.1429) and the drapers (c.1521) in London, or connections between particular crafts and existing hospital foundations such as that between the mariners of Hull and Trinity hospital (1441-2) and Bristol and St. Bartholomew’s (1445) (Orme & Webster 1995, 116).

The significance of guild, or fraternity hospitals is that they form part of a national and local shift in hospital foundations. Rubin (1989, 55) argues that the demographic crises and socio-economic shifts of the fourteenth century transformed existing discourses of charity in which poverty was perceived as virtuous. The poor became seen as a social menace, and more discrete and controllable forms of poor relief are argued to have resulted from this shift as part of a ‘planned and concerted effort to benefit the founder’s soul’ (Rubin 1989, 55; Tierney 1959). Rather than being the *raison d’être* of late medieval hospitals, the poor were therefore grafted on to foundations as the ‘meek who owed their survival to charitable giving’ (Rubin 1994, 55). Cullum (1994) disagrees with Rubin’s general hypothesis of a steady decline in charitable giving from the Black Death onwards. Although she highlights the problems of drawing chronological patterns from fragmentary sources, she identifies two late medieval ‘boom’ periods in the foundation of hospitals and charitable institutions in York. Large numbers of *maisons dieu* and hospitals appear to have been founded in a period of post-Black Death prosperity in 1380s-90s. A second wave of foundations consisting largely of institutions associated with religious guilds and fraternities is identified during the 1430s-1440s. Cullum (1994, 45) links this to a period of local and national economic decline, and therefore suggests that these guild hospitals were probably established by guilds to ‘protect their more vulnerable members from the effects of developing recession’.

### **The chronology and topography of York’s late medieval hospitals**

Few of the historical interpretations outlined above engage in more than a cursory way with the archaeology of hospital institutions but a useful model for this type of study is Gilchrist's (1992; 1994b) work on leper hospitals. Gilchrist focuses attention on their liminal topographical position in medieval towns and the spatial control of inmates within them. Architectural space is interpreted not only as a mechanism which physically distinguished lepers from the rest of civic society but also as one through which their stigmatised bodies were *displayed* to that society (1994b, 29). Although York's earlier medieval hospitals such as St. Leonard's, St. Mary's and St. Thomas' and the leper hospital of St. Nicholas were located in 'liminal areas' as Carlin (1989) and Gilchrist (1994b) suggest, the majority of late fourteenth-century hospitals and *maisons dieu* were actually located in the centre or suburbs of the city, cheek-by-jowl with the houses and parishes of their founders and benefactors, reflecting the often parochially-based character of late medieval charity (Appendix 6, table 9).

*Maisons dieu*, like hospitals, were a particular species of chantry designed to construct spiritual merit on behalf of their founders (Cullum 1994, 51; Rubin 1989, 55; Orme & Webster 1995, 49). All these institutions were premised on the doctrine of Purgatory and the belief in the intercessory power of prayer. Although theological and doctrinal debate about the nature of Purgatory continued throughout the period, the fourth- and fifth-century writings of St. Augustine made it clear that the living could assist the dead through suffrage (Binski 1996, 182-4; Duffy 1992, 343-8). An unequal but reciprocal relationship was perceived to exist between the living and the dead, for although the latter were powerless to help themselves, they were believed to be able to intercede on behalf of the living. By the later medieval period this economy of salvation had become elaborated and obscured by the practices associated with the *Ars moriendi* -the art of 'dying well' (Binski 1996, 188; Duffy 1992, 315ff.; Bassett 1992). The early sixteenth-century *Kalendar of Sheperds* emphasised that there were 'four keys...for to open purgatory': saying masses and prayers for the repose of the soul, and carrying out works of penance and alms-deeds (Duffy 1992, 354). The fact that the relationship between the living and the dead was believed to be based on kinship and friendship networks established in life, placed considerable emphasis on communal responsibility for the remembrance of the individual's soul. Acts of patronage and charity affirmed the individual's unity in salvation with the parish or fraternal community, and the belief that this unity would be perpetuated beyond the grave (Duffy 1992, 337).

### Medieval hospitals and York's guild hospitals: organisation, space and structure

The demolition and disappearance of most *maisons dieu* and guild hospitals in York makes it difficult to establish the archaeological evidence for their original medieval appearance. Apart from Trinity hospital the only surviving guild foundation is St. Anthony's, the archaeological evidence of which is largely inaccessible (see p. 87-90; 102-3). The absence of these institutions from the chantry surveys of 1546 and 1548 is usually interpreted as evidence that most guild chapels were suppressed and hospitals were 'Protestantised' at the Reformation. The interpretation presented below will therefore focus on Trinity hospital, against which the evidence from other guild hospitals and chapels will be set (see p. 59ff.). In 1360 the fraternity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary obtained a charter for the foundation of an endowed hospital which was to be governed by a chaplain. The practical care of the 'thirteen poor and feeble persons', or inmates, was to be in the hands of a master who was 'continually and personally to dwell there' (YMA, vii-viii). The number of inmates and chaplains was to be expanded as the guild's funds increased, and a later inquisition indicates that by 1396 another chaplain had been engaged (YMA, viii). By the time of the rebuilding of the chapel in 1411 these two chaplains were assisted by two clerks, and the number of inmates had increased to thirty (YMA, ix).

The fact that special arrangements had to be made in 1438-9 to allow the sister of one Richard Saunderson, deceased, to enter the hospital, indicates that guild hospital inmates were not normally ex-members of the fraternity or their relatives (YMA, 50-1). The preservation of the undercroft as a space in which only the genuinely infirm and poor were accommodated is also indicated by an indenture of 1439 stipulating that although Joan Cantcliffe, widow, was to have a tenement

within the hospital aforesaid, which Abraham Colton lately caused to be built, and one garden to the same annexed, with an entry leading to the river Foss, and one bed in the said hospital, and four pence in silver [she] ..shall not sell or alienate the foresaid bed or fourpence...but the said bed and fourpence shall maintain and take to her own proper use. (YMA, 51)

As in other hospitals, the right to present pensioners was a privilege normally exercised by the master of the hospital which could also be granted to favoured members or former masters such as John Warthill in 1430

that what bed of the poure foulk that voides next after the firste voidance wythin the hospitall of the Trinite, in Fossegate, in York, whedir it be of a man or of a woman.....the said John Warthill sall gyfe that bed for that tyme to a pouere man or a pouere woman. (YMA, 32)

The staff of guild hospitals also paralleled contemporary foundations. The master was assisted by lay sisters and brethren, and in 1475 payments were also made to a 'beadle' (YMA, 73). The 'sisters' of the house may well have been female inmates whose duties often included caring for their male brethren (Carlin 1989, 32; Rawcliffe 1997, 170-215). The post of master was often held by a member of the clergy and was a privileged position held at Trinity hall by prominent individuals such as Sir William Ottley and Sir John Gilliot (Orme & Webster 1995, 77). Masters were usually provided with some form of separate accommodation (Carlin 1989, 28) and the north-west end the undercroft of Trinity hall may have provided such a function (see p.60). Similar screening of the low ends of hospitals occurred at St. Anne, Ripon and St. Bartholomew, Bristol (Gilchrist 1995, 19).

The spatial and structural arrangement of hospitals has been considered by Carlin (1989, 28) Orme & Webster (1995, 85-97) and Gilchrist (1992, 103-118). These studies focus on the architectural nucleus of the infirmary hall and chapel at the expense of the symbolically and practically important boundaries or enclosures which surrounded these institutions (Gilchrist 1994b, 104). Most hospitals were enclosed by some form of gate or precinct which, as at St. Mary's, Newark (1330-1), could be used by the wardens to screen prospective patients and heard their confession before they were admitted to the infirmary hall itself (Carlin 1989, 26), a process satirised in the 1536 poem *The hye way to the Spyttel house* (Judges 1936, 1-25). Some, such as St. Leonard's in York, were arranged around double courtyards; one for the church and clergy and one for those hospital buildings used by the public (Cullum 1991). The gates and courtyards of guild hospitals may well have provided similar spaces in which inmates could be ritually examined or admitted into the fraternal community. Unlike some of their counterparts, guild hospitals do not appear to have had their own cemeteries and most guilds appear to have retained an affiliation to their local parish church, in which inmates were probably buried.

Apart from leper houses, most medieval hospitals were characterised by an infirmary with an associated chapel to the east; an arrangement which had strong spatial parallels with the nave and chancel of the parish church. The distinctive relationship of infirmary hall to chapel appears at early monastic sites such as Canterbury Cathedral as well as thirteenth-century hospitals such as St. Giles, Beverley and Kingsthorpe, Northampton. This arrangement allowed the bedridden sick to observe the celebration of mass by hospital chaplains. The importance of this relationship is stressed by the provision of separate double chapels for the double naves of St. John's, Winchester or a two-storey chapel, as at St. John's, Sherborne. Alternatively the chapel could be placed transversely on a north-south axis, as at St. John's Canterbury and St. Mary's, Strood. It is usually presumed that early infirmary halls were communal but that they provided separate



accommodation for men and women in screened aisles, as at St. Mary's Chichester, St. Mary's, Dover and St. Mary's, Newarke (fig. 178; Gilchrist 1994b, 107; Carlin 1989, 28; Orme & Webster 1995, 85). Sometimes double naves for the sexes were created, as at St. Nicholas', Salisbury and St. John, Winchester, or men's and women's infirmaries were built one on top of the other, as at St. John's, Sherborne.

The lack of archaeological excavation of York's guild hospitals makes it difficult to establish exactly how far their chapels and hospitals followed this characteristic arrangement (see p. 59 ff.; 87-90; 102-3). However there appears to have been a clear connection between the hospitals and chapels of Trinity hall, St. Thomas's, the Guildhall and St. John the Baptist's, whilst the walls of the passage separating the hospital and chapel at St. Anthony's may have been pierced to facilitate visual access between the two. There does not appear to have been a partition between the male and female inmates of Trinity hospital, however. Before 1411 they were probably accommodated along the south-west wall whilst access was to an earlier building/chapel abutting the north-east wall was maintained. After the reconstruction of the chapel in 1411 the men and women may have been separated in the double aisles of the hospital, but the licence of 1411 implies that there was clear visual access between all the inmates and the pyx hanging above the chapel's high altar (YMA, *ix*). Although hospitals such as St. Mary's, Chichester, St. Nicholas', Salisbury and St. John, Cirencester were often partitioned into private spaces in the fifteenth century, the York halls seem to have retained their communal infirmary plans until the end of the period. A degree of privacy may however have been created by the beds with curtains installed at Trinity hospital in 1437 and 1438 (YMA, 49). Similar beds with screens are known to have existed at Henry VII's Savoy hospital (Carlin 1989, 29).

The close spatial relationship between medieval hospitals and chapels is usually presumed to reflect contemporary belief in the spiritual and medicinal benefits of the mass. However, it can also be interpreted as a mechanism through which hospital inmates were transformed into a chantry community. Both these interpretations are supported by the stipulation in numerous hospital licences that inmates should be able to see the elevation of the host from their beds. The panacean qualities of Christ's body and blood had been widely established from St. Augustine onwards (Rawcliffe 1997, 19). These qualities were easily transferred to the Eucharist, which was believed not only to have the power to heal the spiritual torments of the soul, but also the physical ailments of the body. Although communion was the focus of this belief, these qualities also became gradually associated with the simple witness of transubstantiation at the moment when the Host was elevated in the mass (Rubin 1991a, 61; Anderson 1963; 1971). Because the laity received communion so infrequently, this visual participation in the mass was an opportunity for

spiritual communion based on the fervent contemplation rather than the tasting or ‘smackyng’ of the Host-God. It also had advantages for those unable to receive communion because of infirmity or illness, in a period when the transportation of the Host to the sick had become a precarious and elaborate ritual (Rubin 1991a, 77-82).

Hospital inmates were therefore encouraged to participate visually and orally in the mass on the certain grounds that spiritual, if not physical, benefits would be imparted by this process. Such practices were encouraged by the Fourth Lateran Council and by the promulgations of the English episcopacy (Rawcliffe 1997, 19). However, even if inmates genuinely believed in the physical benefits accrued by witnessing the mass, the amelioration of their spiritual welfare was undoubtedly also designed to improve the quality of the prayers which they said on behalf of their founders. The significance of the spatial relationship of hospitals and chapels was that it actually forced inmates to participate in a liturgical round, whether they wished to or not. This would have centred on the ‘divine office’ -the seven (or eight) daily services said at regular intervals between midnight and evening which all clergy were obliged to perform. In addition mass was probably said at some point in the morning by the chapel priest. Trinity hospital’s foundation licence of 1373 stipulated that the office of the dead was to be recited daily, whilst the seven penitential psalms with the litany of the King were to be said three times a week. The brethren and sisters of hospitals would also have been expected to engage in private prayers, usually multiples of Paternoster, Ave Maria and the Creed (Orme & Webster 1995, 52). This process was clearly a highly effective way for guilds to educate hospital inmates and draw them into the spiritual community of the fraternity. But their involvement in these rituals also made inmates part of the very mechanism through which the normative discourses and sacerdotal power of the late medieval church was reproduced.

The appearance of Trinity chapel can be reconstructed on the basis of fifteenth-century archaeological and documentary evidence (figs. 20-22; 179; see p. 56-58). There were two windows in its south-west elevation, one in its north-east elevation and an east light above the high altar slightly larger than the Victorian replacement now *in situ*. A series of accounts refer to the reglazing of these chapel windows in the 1490s. In 1490 William Cleveland, master of the hospital made general repairs to the masonry and bars of the chapel windows, and spent three pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence on a great glass window of seven panes at the high altar (YMA, 83). In the same year alderman John Gilliot also paid for the making and repair of ‘diverse’ windows in the chapel (YMA, 82). Three years later the same men were involved in a further re-glazing scheme. William Cleveland, Thomas Fynch and the wife of the late John Ince ‘made a glasse wyndow nexte unto the alter of the soweth sied of thare owne costis’ and further

down the south-west wall, the executor of one master Carre ‘maide a glasse wyndow next of the same’ (YMA, 85-6). On the opposite side of the chapel John Gilliot ‘paid for glassyng the wyndow of the north seid, next unto the hye altar’, and the contents of his window were later described as ‘two ymages of Saint John and Saint Thomas’ located over ‘the altar of Saint Kateryn’ (YMA, 86). Thomas Fynch also gave St. Katherine’s altar a frontal of striped ‘satane frenget with white, red, grene silk, a scheild of sylver in the mydst’ (YMA, 85), whilst John Gilliot provided a cloth for the high altar which had itself received a new marble or alabaster top in 1478 (YMA, 74, 98). Gilliot’s cloth had a frontal of russet satin ‘with iij sheilds of white sylver and powdered with xxxvj letters of gold of Veysse, and two kyettys of russat sairsnet pertenying to the same’, and was accompanied by a ‘corpal with the case of blake welwett with one ymegge if the Trinite of golde’ (YMA, 86).

The 1493 re-glazing of Trinity chapel provided an opportunity for members to express their patronage through a medium which was being exploited in a particularly effective way in all York’s contemporary parish churches. Apart from the depiction of St. Thomas and St. John in the north-east light there is little indication of the iconography of Trinity chapel’s windows, but it is probable that it paralleled contemporary parochial stained glass. The dedication of the hospital to the Trinity and the fraternity to Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary may have influenced Cleveland to emulate the Trinity, Coronation of the Virgin and Corpus Christi in John Walker’s 1471 chancel window at Holy Trinity Goodramgate. Alternatively the seven-light window could have been designed to accommodate the seven Corporal Acts of Mercy, such as that of the mercer Nicholas Blackburn in All Saints’ North Street (fig. 180). Successive and competing masters such as Gilliot and Cleveland sought to establish a permanent presence in the collective memory of the fraternity through such acts of patronage. These men were colourful rivals who each held the office of master several times in the late fifteenth century (see for example YMA, 81-5). It is therefore intriguing that when John Gilliot became master once again, in 1501, he appears to have replaced Cleveland’s 1493 window above St. Thomas’s altar,

unius fenestre vitrie in capella Sancte Trinitas fundata in Fossegate de altari  
Sancte Thome, martyris (YMA, 109)

Was this an attempt by Gilliot to erase Cleveland’s memory from the hospital? Or was he making a powerful statement about their relative status by flanking Cleveland’s great east window with two of his own?

To these sources we can add items which appear in the account rolls as gifts to, or the property of, the fifteenth-century chapel, such as Sir William Ottley’s bequest of intricately embroidered vestments, psalters, portable breviaries, and missals in 1432 (YMA, 41-2). An important but

problematic inventory of the chapel is also bound into folios 148v-157v of the original MS, which Sellers suggests dates to c.1554 (YMA, 96). The inventory includes dozens of artefacts including John Fox's gift of a vestment with 'grene birds' a mass book, an altar cloth with a white frontal and a pair of 'crewittis and ij laton cadellstyks' to the high altar (YMA, 99) and the 'burden bed of waynscott, and a bellus of waynscott over the bed' given 'to the chawmer of Saynt Thomas of Canterbury prest'. The 1554 date means that the medieval provenance of the numerous altar cloths, vestments, mass books, and hangings which are recorded as belonging to the chapel's subsidiary altars is uncertain, but they may well have been items curated by the mystery for over a century (YMA, 99). If so they must have been deliberately hidden or concealed during the Reformation, and support for this interpretation is given by the fact that the high altar, the subsidiary altar of St. Thomas and another of St. John the Baptist also appear in the inventory (YMA, 98). This suggests that either that the altar of St. Katherine had a joint dedication or that there was a further subsidiary altar dedicated to St. John the Baptist which may have been located under Carre's 1493 window in the south-west wall.

Although it is common to find multiple altars in medieval parish churches, this is not a phenomenon which has been widely discussed in relation to guild chapels. There are several interpretations of the altars in Trinity chapel which may inform future agendas in this area of research. The fact that all the altars were dedicated to popular hospital saints may simply indicate that the fraternity wished to stress the connection between the hospital and the chapel. But these were also saints to which some of the most prominent hospitals in medieval York were dedicated. The altars may therefore have been designed to symbolise links between Trinity hospital and other institutions with which members of the fraternity and mystery were connected. St. John the Baptist and St. Thomas also had important connections for two guilds which patronised Trinity chapel before establishing their own foundations. In 1386 St. John the Baptist's fraternity made an agreement with Trinity hospital to found a perpetual chantry in its chapel, whilst the Corpus Christi guild regularly met there before building their own hall at St. Thomas' hospital in 1478. The meaning, or 'regionalisation', of space within the hospital can therefore be argued to have been entirely dependent on the presence or absence of priests in the chapel, and the liturgical practices in which they were engaged. Lights, sacring bells, ritual chanting and incense burning provided a series of visual and oral cues to inmates which signalled the transformation of the hospital-chapel into a ritual space. These cues culminated in the elevation of the host at the high altar, the visual impact of which was heightened by the provision of large numbers of lights, candles and tapers (Rubin 1991a, 55-61). Moreover this moment of elevation was also one at which the powerful connection between the Eucharist and its symbolic evocation of the Last Supper was exploited to reinforce the social status of the guild elite. A clear spatial connection

existed at all three of York's surviving fraternity halls between the dais end of the hall and the chapel (fig. 181). At the moment of elevation it was therefore not only the fraternal community of the dead with which the guild elite were associated, but the spiritual fraternity of the Apostles themselves. The successful operation of this mechanism relied on inmates' ability not only to recognise the ritual's symbolic and cultural significance, but also to maintain appropriate forms of behaviour. Just as illness made delivery of communion to the sick a dangerous and difficult practice (Rubin 1991a, 77-8), so a loss of bodily control by inmates at the moment of elevation could jeopardise the ritual significance of the mass. This may well explain why some hospitals were reluctant to admit the sick, insane, pregnant women and children, and why they insisted on catechising and confessing inmates before their admission (Carlin 1989, 25). For fraternities and guilds, the bodies of the poor were both symbols and resources; made physically distinct by their physical infirmity but spiritually valuable by virtue of that very fact.

Fraternities and guilds offered their members a means of reinforcing particular connections within and beyond the parochial community, in life as well as in death. But like the parochial bede roll this membership could be restrictive. An apparent 'unity' in salvation was one which included only those willing -and able- to play the parochial or fraternal 'game of appearances'. This is particularly apparent in the ways in which the living sought to establish intercession for their souls. Late medieval eschatology was dominated by the belief that at the Day of Judgement men and women would be judged, not only on the piety of their souls, but by their actions to the poor and weak whilst living (Matthew 25). This placed considerable emphasis on carrying out highly visible acts of charity. Some late medieval testators simply requested the highly visible presence of the poor at their funeral, often as torch bearers in livery, such as John Barker, a tailor in 1489/90 who left 2s 4d to the poor who were to carry torches at his funeral (BIHR Prob. Reg 5.f.376r-v). But it was the 'seven corporal acts of mercy' -feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, relieving the prisoner, housing the stranger, and burying the dead- which became the most powerful image for those seeking to discharge their charitable debts. Some late medieval wills made explicit reference to the acts, literally ticking them off as mortuary bequests, whilst others emphasised their fulfilment of the acts through a variety of artistic media (Duffy 1992, 360). Nicholas Blackburn -a prosperous York merchant responsible for the Corporal Acts of Mercy window in All Saints', North Street- did both. The lack of information concerning the involvement of hospital inmates in fraternity or guild funerals makes it difficult to understand the role of the guildhall in funerary rituals. Probate records suggest that guild members were buried in their parish church, but the potential for future research on this subject is highlighted by the work of Harding (1992) and Gittings (1992).

The charitable and intercessory practices associated with medieval death and burial were ritual acts through which the individual's passage into Purgatory could be negotiated and the social ties of the living reaffirmed (Gittings 1992, 172). The advantage of hospitals and *maisons dieu* was that they were both a species of chantry and an institutionalised expression of the acts of mercy which exploited the particular qualities of the prayers of the poor. These qualities were outlined in Biblical stories such as *Dives and Lazarus* (Luke 16; Duffy 1992, 360-1). However such sources also made it explicit that effective intercession was also dependent on the poor being in a state of spiritual grace. Medieval testators were therefore faced with the need to establish the spiritual 'worthiness' of the recipients of their charity as well as the desire to ensure that their charitable acts were reciprocated through appropriate acts of intercession. This must have been difficult in institutions such as *maisons dieu* in which inmates were expected to support themselves by begging (Cullum 1994, 46-7). The particular significance of the 1430s-40s 'boom' in York's guild hospital foundations is that it appears to coincide with an apparent decline in the foundation of chantries, a pattern attributed by Dobson (1967, 32; 1992, 327) to contemporary economic recession. By fusing the dual functions of *maison dieu* and chantry into a single coherent architectural unit, the guild hospital-chapel offered members a means of internalising their acts of charity and ensuring the maximum spiritual reward for their investment.

Guild hospitals and chapels were therefore places in which the idea of the individual and the community and were taken apart, explored and re-made on a daily basis. This is significant, for Binski (1996, 120) has argued that the chantry was essentially a private foundation and a private space -the product of a 'culture of 'interiority' and the 'manifestation of that drift from the communal to the private which.... had exposed numerous tensions in the culture of death and burial since the twelfth century'. The chronological shift in York away from chantries and towards the patronage of institutions such as guild hospitals suggests that this process is more complex than Binski implies. These were foundations in which the construction of *individual* salvation was dependent upon the intercession of the *community*, and in which the tensions between the individual and the community were explored through the discourse of the body. Just as the fraternal 'body' was a metaphor based on both the idea of the body politic and the physical bodies of guild members, so the social identities of hospital inmates were shaped by their corporeality. Although as Shilling (1993, 130-3) emphasises, the intrinsic value of the bodies of the poor and disabled might be low, their symbolic value could be converted into cultural and social capital. It is this process of control, conversion and manipulation of the spiritual labour or 'body work' of inmates which makes the guild hospital, rather than the chantry, particularly analogous to Foucault's (1979) understanding of 'disciplinary space'.

## 6.6 Guildhalls and civic identity in later medieval York

The final section of this chapter will consider the institutional shift represented by the construction of guildhalls in relation to fifteenth-century York. It will suggest that guilds and fraternities were normative associations which reinforced the values and ideologies of civic society and the late medieval church through the manipulation of dominant religious and political discourses. In particular it will stress the ways in which the social identities structured in the guildhall and hospital were based on particular discourses about labour, work and charity which emerged as a consequence of the socio-economic shifts of the preceding century. The section will return to the idea of *habitus* and conclude that the social processes observable in the guildhall were part of a wider structuration of ‘civic society’ which can be explored through other aspects of civic space and urban material and ceremonial culture.

The question of economic decline in late medieval towns is still hotly contested by urban historians (Reynolds 1980; Dyer 1991; Hadwin 1986; Palliser 1988). Although many English provincial towns such as York experienced a period of expansion and recovery after the crises of the mid fourteenth century, in a number of towns this appears to have been followed by a period of economic contraction or crisis in the fifteenth century. Several sources have been used to establish this phenomenon, including industrial shifts such as the movement of cloth production out of York and into the West of Yorkshire and an associated decline in the number of cloth-related craftsmen seeking the freedom of the city (Bartlett 1960). Early sixteenth-century corporate pleas to the Crown for the remission of the fee farm also describe long term contractions in trade and the decay of urban fabric (Bartlett 1960; Dobson 1977; Rigby 1984), and a lack of building activity has been linked to an apparent decline in the income from rents (Palliser 1978). A contraction in the personal fortunes of citizens has also been established from the apparent reluctance of prominent men to take on civic office (Clark and Slack 1972; Phythian-Adams 197; Dobson 1973; 1977) as well as a decline in the foundation of charitable institutions such as chantries (Dobson 1967; 1992).

There is a danger however, in interpreting these factors as evidence of widespread decline and crisis in late medieval English provincial towns (Clark and Slack 1972; 1979). The statistical evidence of economic decline has been challenged by Bridbury’s (1981) assertion that there was a period of relative (rather than absolute) economic *growth* during the fifteenth century. Bridbury (1981) also suggests that early sixteenth-century corporate pleas of poverty were specifically designed to divert money from the fee farm to maintain oligarchic power bases. And the apparent evasion of or ‘flight from’ civic office has been interpreted as evidence that late medieval urban

mercantile plutocracies were simply avoiding financially onerous and politically unrewarding positions in favour of politically advantageous posts (Kermode 1982; 1987). Recent syntheses have therefore stressed the need for more comparative and empirical diachronic studies of individual towns and their rural hinterlands. The wealth of evidence from York suggests that although the shift of the cloth trade from York to the West Riding had a profound impact on particular sections of the craft and mercantile industry, there were plenty of wealthy and prosperous individuals still able -and willing- to engage in civic politics and hold civic office throughout the fifteenth century (Palliser 1988; Kermode 1982; 1987).

It may therefore be suggested that the fluctuating economic conditions of fifteenth-century towns created an air of uncertainty in which discussions about the civic economy, personal wealth and charitable provision for those unable to support themselves, fed into existing discourses about work and charity. These in turn were the product of the long term ‘conjunctural’ changes of the previous century which had resulted in the transformation of the labour market and the social and political unrest which culminated in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. Rubin suggests that late medieval understandings of poverty were constructed at the intersection of two processes:

the process of economic, demographic and social change which refashions areas and forms of need on the one hand, and the cultural perceptions of need as they are translated into idioms of charity and evaluations held by diverse social groups on the other. (Rubin 1994, 169-182)

The discursive construction and distinction between different types of the ‘poor’ was not therefore something new or peculiar to the fifteenth century. As early as 1349 and 1348 the respective Ordinance and Statute of Labourers drew distinctions between those genuinely ‘impotent to serve’ and able-bodied beggars, and forbade giving alms to the latter (23 Edward III, c.7; 12 Richard II, c.7 in Slack 1988, 22). These distinctions were reproduced in the sumptuary and labour legislation which followed the Peasants’ Revolt (Aers 1983; Dyer 1989, 86-7; Goldberg and Ormrod forthcoming). And the binary opposites of the diligent worker and the able-bodied but unwilling pauper loom large in contemporary literature. Chaucer, Langland, Wyclif and Gower all depicted the latter as a social threat to a spiritual and political order founded on the idea of work and labour.

During the fifteenth century the general and indiscriminate provision of outdoor relief or alms and dole to the poor was therefore replaced by a ‘more directly targeted and closely scrutinised form of charitable giving’ which was closely linked to the supposed ‘worthiness’ of the recipient



(Rubin 1994, 55). The guildhall was a space in which charity could be provided for members who had fallen on hard times, but this was often on the condition that the individual had fallen into poverty through misfortune rather than misdeed, and may well have been designed to ensure that the public reputation of the guild was not damaged or compromised by the financial collapse of an individual (McRee 1993, 209-10). Guildhalls and hospitals therefore provided material mechanisms through which charity could be targeted towards those whose character and reputation was known to the guild. They also provided *locales* in which the ‘worthy’ poor could be manipulated and controlled but also ones in which a symbolic contrast could be drawn between those who contributed to the economic and political welfare of the community through their physical and economic labour, and those who contributed to its social welfare through a form of spiritual labour.

The identities and social relationships produced within the guildhall were therefore being structured by, but also reflexively structuring civic society. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed consideration of late medieval ‘civism’, it is worth drawing attention to the way in which the expansion and consolidation of the infrastructure of late medieval urban government was accompanied by a parallel development of a complex understanding about the duties and privileges of citizenship (Palliser 1994; Holt and Rosser 1990; Hilton 1992; Rigby 1995; Thomson 1988). The creation of governing elites has received considerable attention (Hibbert 1978; Kowaleski 1984; Horrox 1988; Rigby 1988; 1995; Kermode 1988; Carpenter forthcoming) as has the use and manipulation of civic ceremony (James 1983; Lindenbaum 1994; McRee 1994; Attreed 1994; Beckwith 1994; 1996b) and civic records (O’Brien forthcoming). Rees Jones is engaged in a particular consideration of many of these issues in relation to York (pers. comm.). The political infrastructure of York was well-established by the time the charter of 1396 confirmed the privileges of the mayoralty, the sheriffs, chamberlains and the Council of Twelve (who were already known as ‘aldermen’ in 1399 (VCH 1961, 78). The Council of Twenty Four, or *probi homines* were also in existence at this date, as was the *communitas* or Council of Forty Eight -the nominal representatives of the civic community as a whole. The following century was therefore a period in which the civic community had to be defined and in which its normative political and social ideologies had to be discursively constructed through a variety of material and ritual mechanisms.

In York, the conciliar structure of civic government was supported by the operation of two grassroots organisations. The ward system provided control over the topographical division of the city into neighbourhoods and parishes, whilst the guild system enabled civic government to be involved actively in the control and regulation of the occupational, or craft, structure of the city. In

many ways this supports Swanson's (1989) assertion that the guild system was primarily a political tool, but as Rosser (1997) has maintained, guilds could not be part of a broad political system regulating the lives of urban workers without also having a profound impact on the practical operation of trade and manufacture. The contention of this thesis is that rather than being imposed on the artisan class by a mercantile elite (Swanson 1989; Rigby 1995, 159), guilds were actively used by a fairly diverse range of people to gain access to political power as well as to important social and economic networks of credit and trust.

Clearly more prosopographical research along the lines of that of Wheatley (1993) and Crouch (1995), Rees Jones (forthcoming) and Carpenter (forthcoming) is required to establish the specific connections between the membership of particular guilds and civic office in York. But comparative national studies suggest that both religious fraternities and craft mysteries were used in this way (McRee 1987; 1992; Kowaleski 1984; Rosser 1997; Nightingale 1989; 1995). Indeed, although there was always a strong connection between York's mercantile community and the *cursus honorum* of civic office (Palliser 1979; Sellers 1918), the city was not exclusively governed by a mercantile 'oligarchy'. Prosopographical research has emphasised the social and economic diversity of members of the mercers' guild (Wheatley 1993) whilst recent research by Kermode (1998) has found little evidence for Thrupp's (1941; 1948; Carus-Wilson 1967) model of the self-conscious merchant class which has been often been imposed on medieval York.

Both craft and religious guilds were normative institutions which structured and reproduced the values and ideologies of civic society. They were successful precisely because they were able to express the complex and overlapping web of social roles and relationships of their members and because, rather than glossing over the divisions and tensions in urban society, they provided material mechanisms through which these could be negotiated. But although their membership was internally diverse, it was still exclusive. It consisted of those who had voluntarily chosen to play McRee's (1987) 'game of appearances', and incorporated those from the margins of society only because their spiritual labour could be converted into spiritual capital. The idea of the civic community was not simply something defined by a topographical or administrative unit, but one which had to be discursively constructed and continually reproduced on a daily basis.

Demographic impermanence, high immigration rates, and the fact that allegiances to the local ties of kin, household, parish and neighbourhood often took priority on a day-to-day basis, meant that civic authorities needed institutional and material mechanisms through which this process could be structured. Guilds were therefore important because they were microcosms of the kind of society which governments sought to create: internally diverse but normative groups of

individuals brought together to give tangible and ritual expression to the idea of the civic community.

### **6.7 Civic identity and civic space**

The significance of medieval public architecture has often been overlooked because of the widespread replacement of medieval guild and town halls between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (Tittler 1991; Borsay 1989). Authors have seen these new buildings as mechanisms through which new forms of civic identity and civic consciousness were structured and reproduced. These have therefore been set within the wider context of changes in the perception and manipulation of the built environment which emerged as products of the European urban Renaissance (Borsay 1989; Lefebvre 1994) or Enlightenment (Markus 1993). However the archaeological interpretation of medieval guildhalls presented above forces us to question these assumptions. It indicates that both the medieval craftsmen *and* their patrons had a sophisticated understanding of the ways in which architectural space could be used to structure civic identity, political power and social control. Ongoing research suggests that this was a *habitus* which operated not only in ecclesiastical, domestic and public buildings such as guildhalls, but also civic structures such as York's Guildhall, Council Chamber, bridge chapels, and *maisons dieu*. In many ways, Tittler's assertion that

the desire to construct, renovate or convert a hall often came about not out of any desire for ostentation at a time of surplus building capital, or necessarily even at a time of particular prosperity, but rather out of the need to symbolise a particular administrative reality at a crucial stage of urban *political* rather than economic activity. (Tittler 1991, 93)

holds as true for medieval public buildings such as guildhalls as it does for their sixteenth-century replacements. The detailed archaeological interpretation of York's medieval guildhalls therefore demonstrates that a concern with the deliberate manipulation of civic buildings and civic space was not a characteristic of modernity, but an important part of medieval construction and design. The central difference between medieval and early modern *habitus*, as I will argue in Chapter 7, was that the former was underpinned by the discourses of Catholicism. The chronology of this shift is important because a number of authors have argued that a process of 'secularisation of space' can be identified in late medieval ecclesiastical buildings (Graves 1989; Binski 1996). It is therefore necessary to explore these issues in relation to the shared *habitus* of guildhalls and churches, and to the 'appropriation' of guildhalls during the fifteenth century by nominally 'secular' craft mysteries.

The popularity of religious guilds has often been interpreted as part of the active participation of the laity in the devotional and liturgical practices of the late medieval church (Binski 1996; Burgess 1988; 1991; Duffy 1992) of which an expansion in the patronage of ecclesiastical buildings and their associated material culture is seen to be a part (Jacob 1969, 264; Duffy 1992, 81). Such charitable acts clearly conferred important spiritual benefits on the donor. However, several authors have argued that these acts of patronage were also part of a deeper process of appropriation of religious culture by secular authority. For example, Graves (1989, 313) starts from the premise that there was a fundamental shift in the later medieval period when the parish church became

the locus not only of religious practice but of practices within discourses which to modern comprehension seem more secular, such as those of patronage and social position (1989, 301).

She therefore interprets the construction of chantry chapels and subsidiary altars as the visual usurpation of ecclesiastical space, the disruption of liturgical activity, and the (re)organisation of ritual movement by secular authority (Graves 1989, 315). Binski (1996) and Dobson (1992) have also suggested that the construction of funerary monuments and chantry chapels was an annexation of communal religious space by the secular individual. Binski sees this as a product of contemporary anxieties about the 'privileges of personal interiority' (see above p. 149). The cellular incursion of the chantry chapel into the communal space of the church is therefore interpreted as a form of 'disciplinary space', a 'prison turned outside-in....a world of private opulence located in a sphere of public squalor and relatively unstructured lay religious experience' (Binski 1996, 120).

It is clear that the archaeological interpretation of guild hospitals presented in this chapter does not sit easily with these hypotheses about the secularisation or privatisation of fifteenth-century space. Giddens (1984) and Barrett (1989) have emphasised that power is constructed through the manipulation of the symbolic codes through which knowledge is produced. However, although religion was undoubtedly the dominant discourse in late medieval society, the use of religious ideology and practice to structure social and political identities and relations was not a new or radical departure of the later medieval period. These practices do not represent a disjuncture with the past, but rather the complex ways in which *all* aspects of medieval society and social power were embedded in and underpinned by religious discourse. It is the increasing sophistication of the material and ritual mechanisms through which these processes were structured in the later medieval period which should therefore capture our archaeological attention.

A similar critique must be applied to the interpretation of the ‘rise of the individual’ and the ‘privatisation of space’ in late medieval houses, for guildhalls had important parallels with domestic as well as ecclesiastical buildings. It has long been suggested that the medieval open hall was in ‘decline’ in the fifteenth century (Wood 1965, 58; Girouard 1978, 30-1, 58-9; Smith 1992, 25; Thompson 1995, 177-192) and this would imply that late medieval guildhalls were appropriating a form already considered archaic in domestic buildings. Schofield has suggested that this was because guildhalls continued to use their halls in ‘traditional’ ways (Schofield 1995, 44) and similar interpretations have been made of contemporary collegiate foundations. These hypotheses are based on the assumption that the open hall was a symbol of ‘community’ and that a decline in its everyday use therefore symbolised the fragmentation of the organic medieval community (Girouard 1978, 30-1; Heal 1984; 1990).

However important challenges to this archaeological consensus have been raised by Grenville’s (1997, 107-110) demonstration that far from decreasing in size, late medieval halls appear to get larger and more elaborate *alongside* their expanded parlours, services and lodging ranges. Moreover Leech (1998) has highlighted the fact that the reservation of the open hall for display and ceremonial rather than everyday purposes may have increased rather than decreased its symbolic importance. The retention of the open hall must be understood in relation to its social and symbolic role. As this chapter has argued, the open hall was used to structure a delicate balance between individual *and* communal identities. This function was still of crucial importance to guilds and high status domestic households. The addition of more complex accommodation and different kinds of space simply facilitated the increasingly sophisticated manipulation of this function.

Finally, these hypotheses must be considered in relation to guilds’ involvement in civic rituals such as Corpus Christi. Although the feast was promulgated in 1317 and reached York in 1322 the texts of the Corpus Christi plays were only entered in the civic records in c.1463-1477 (Rubin 1991a, 200; Johnston 1971; 1976). Two conflicting hypotheses have been developed concerning the function of the Corpus Christi processions and plays. They are seen either as rituals designed to ease social tension and structure a holistic sense of civic community (Phythian Adams 1972; James 1983) or as occasions in which the social divisions and tensions between the mercantile elite and the ‘artisan class’ were manifested (Swanson 1989; Beckwith 1994, 1996b). The former

is based on extending an understanding of ritual as a mechanism designed to ease social tension and bind communities together, derived from Durkheim (1965), Turner (1996) and Douglas (1966; 1973) to particular aspects of medieval ritual practice (Bossy 1983; Duffy 1992).

From this perspective it is possible to see Corpus Christi as the mechanism through which the formal constitution of the city was transformed into an idealised social reality to promote social cohesion (Phythian Adams 1972, 63). The Aristotelian metaphor of the ‘body’ within Corpus Christi can be argued to have been a symbolic affirmation of a ‘civic body’ which was in reality, deeply divided (James 1983, 4; see also Nederman and Forhan 1993):

The theme of Corpus Christi is society seen in terms of the body. The concept of the body provided urban societies with a mythology and ritual in terms of which opposites of social wholeness and differentiation could be affirmed and brought into creative tension, one with another. The final intention of the cult was, then, to express the social bond and to contribute to social integration.

In contrast, McRee (1994) suggests that both Corpus Christi plays and processions emphasised the autonomy and separation of guilds from the civic community, discouraging the formation of civic unity and emphasising social division within the city. Beckwith (1994; 1996b) also provides a critique of socially cohesive interpretations of Corpus Christi through a reading of the plays derived from Swanson (1989). The plays are interpreted as a ‘topographical enactment of an increasingly wide gap between the artisanate and the mercantile oligarchy’ (1996b, 74-5). Their registration in York’s civic records between 1463 and 1477 is seen, like the contemporary registration of guild ordinances, to have been part of the mechanism through which the ‘mercantile elite’ imposed an artificial division of labour on an artisan ‘class’ and prevented the development of class consciousness (Beckwith 1994, 262-5). The creation of an alternative ‘artisanal ideology within the play texts which placed an importance on manufacture...rather than on the control of exchange mechanisms’ is seen as a cultural mechanism through which artisans actively contested mercantile power.

These interpretations do not sit easily with the interpretation of the material culture and ritual activities of guilds presented in this thesis. In particular they fail to establish why craft mysteries should have participated so actively in this kind of religious ritual. Goldberg (1997) has suggested that the Corpus Christi plays gave expression to the same kind of religious imperative expressed by craft-affiliated fraternities. However Rosser (1998) has also drawn attention to the important parallels between the form and function of the Corpus Christi plays and existing guild ceremonies. To be successful the plays had to have resonance with, and be understood by, their civic audience. Rather than symbolising an ‘artificial’ division of the artisan class, it can be

argued that the play cycle provided a powerful underpinning of the craft specialisms of later medieval York. Its performance not only reflected but actively structured the public perception of the crafts in a number of ways, particularly through the level of expenditure on the pageant and props, but also through connections between the crafts and the subject matter or staging possibilities of their plays, through which their craft ‘mystery’ could be displayed (Justice 1979). Far from constructing an ‘alternative artisanal ideology’, the performance of the Corpus Christi plays reproduced existing discourses about urban work and the divisions of urban labour.

This connection was reinforced by the fact that both the processions and plays occurred in a wider ritual context for those guilds who processed to the pageant houses or stations of the play from their guildhalls, and who returned there afterwards for communal feasts. The symbolism and meaning of the Corpus Christi plays was therefore also subject to spatial regionalisation:

the Corpus Christi procession and theatre do not merely reflect the shape and function of the medieval town and city they articulate, but mould and recreate urban topography in ways both fantastical and material. (Beckwith 1994, 12).

The realisation of the meaning of the Corpus Christi cycle only took place because of the audience’s capacity to understand the doctrinal *and* political messages operating at different levels within the play texts and performances. The metaphorical ‘body’ evoked in the Corpus Christi plays should therefore be thought of as Lacan’s ‘corps morcelée’; a fragmented, vulnerable and even potentially subversive symbol of the internal diversity of the civic community (Rubin 1996). The power of rituals such as Corpus Christi and *locales* like the guildhall lay in their provision of discursive space in which the individual’s complex and overlapping sense of identity could be constructed in tension with that of the wider civic community. However, those craftsmen/women and journeymen who did not belong to religious fraternities or craft mysteries, and those on the margins of urban society such as the indigent poor, appear as absent from this discursive construction of the civic community as they do its political reality.

## Conclusion

This chapter has presented an archaeological interpretation of the physical structure, spatial organisation and use of York’s medieval fraternity and guildhalls. It has suggested that the close structural and spatial connections between guildhalls and contemporary domestic and ecclesiastical buildings is evidence of a particular form of medieval *habitus*. This was an understanding of the ways in which architectural space could be used to frame social identity and political power, which was underpinned by the dominant religious discourses of Catholicism. Although the chapter has stressed the internal diversity of guilds and the opportunities for human

agency which they afforded, it has also demonstrated that the *locale* of the guildhall was used to structure and reproduce the normative values and ideologies of late medieval civic society. The hall and hospital have been argued to symbolise an important distinction between those who contributed to the economic and political welfare of the city through their craft industry, and those who contributed to the spiritual welfare of the civic community through their spiritual labour. Finally, the chapter has used the archaeological evidence of guildhalls to challenge existing assumptions about the use and meaning of the built environment and social space of late medieval towns. It can therefore be concluded that it is only the use of such a fine-grained and empirically based approach to medieval buildings which allows us to understand the real complexity and sophistication of medieval *habitus*.